

Message Text

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67

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 0083

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, LT

SUBJECT: NEW TENSION BETWEEN KING AND GOVERNMENT

REF: MASERU 61

1. SUMMARY: A NEW TENSION IN UNEASY RELATIONS BETWEEN KING MOSHOESHOE II AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS FLARED UP AS RESULT OF SPEECH BY KING'S YOUNGER BROTHER, CHIEF MASHOPHA SEEISO, IN WHICH HE ATTACKED, BY IMPLICATION, PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN, ACCUSING HIM OF HAVING CONTRIBUTED TO QUEEN MOTHER'S RECENT DEATH. GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE REPORTEDLY FURIOUS AND KING APPREHENSIVE. QUESTION IS WHETHER GOVERNMENT WILL RETALIATE AND THEREBY INFLAME SITUATION, OR LET INCIDENT FADE AWAY IN DEFERENCE TO PRIME MINISTER'S STATED POLICY OF RECONCILIATION.

2. AT FUNERAL SERVICES JANUARY 24 FOR QUEEN MOTHER, 'MABERENG SEEISO, KING'S YOUNGER BROTHER, MASOPHA SEEISO, DELIVERED ORATION ON BEHALF OF ROYAL FAMILY; HE THUS WAS SPEAKING FORMALLY FOR KING. IN ELOQUENT, EMOTIONAL SPEECH, MASOPHA SAID HIS MOTHER HAD BEEN BADLY TREATED IN 1960'S, AND THAT THIS MISTREATMENT HAD CONTRIBUTED TO HER EARLY DEATH. (SHE APPARENTLY DIED OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE IN HER EARLY SIXTIES.) MASOPHA WENT ON TO SAY THAT SOME OF THOSE PRESENT AT FUNERAL WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR MISTREATMENT OF QUEEN

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MOTHER. IMMEDIATE INTERPRETATION PUT ON MASOPHA'S SPEECH WAS

THAT HE WAS ATTACKING PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN, WHO WAS PRESENT WITH MOST OTHER GOVERNMENT MINISTERS. PRIME MINISTER KEPT HIS SILENCE BUT DEPARTED FUNERAL SERVICES EARLY.

3. MASOPHA WAS REFERRING TO LONG SERIES OF INCIDENTS SINCE 1940'S IN WHICH QUEEN MOTHER AND OTHER MEMBERS OF ROYAL FAMILY HAVE SUFFERED WHAT THEY, AND MANY BASOTHO, BELIEVE TO HAVE BEEN CALCULATED INSULTS AND PRIVATION. KING'S FATHER, PARAMOUNT CHIEF SEEISO, DIED IN 1940 WHEN KING WAS SMALL BOY. UNTIL KING REACHED MATURITY, PARAMOUNT CHIEFTAINSHIP WHICH WAS TO BECOME MONARCHY AT INDEPENDENCE, CAME UNDER REGENCY OF SEEISO'S SENIOR WIFE, JMANTSEBO, WHO HAD NO MALE CHILDREN. CHIEF (NOW PRIME MINISTER) JONATHAN WAS PRINCIPAL ADVISOR TO 'MANTSEBO. DURING PERIOD OF SOME TWENTY YEARS, QUEEN MOTHER, SEEISO'S SECOND WIFE, WAS SYSTEMATICALLY EXCLUDED FROM PUBLIC LIFE, ARBITRARILY SEPARATED FROM HER CHILDREN, DEPRIVED OF A DECENT LIVELIHOOD, AND SUBJECTED TO INSULTS BY THE REGENT. WITH JONATHAN'S SUPPORT, REGENT ATTEMPTED TO DELAY KING'S ACCESSION TO THRONE AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

4. SINCE INDEPENDENCE AND MOSHOESHOE'S ACCESSION TO THRONE, PRIME MINISTER JONATHAN HAS SUCCEEDED IN ASSERTING GOVERNMENT'S SUPREMACY OVER MONARCHY, AND IN PROCESS HAS EXILED KING ONCE AND PLACED HIM UNDER HOUSE ARREST AT LEAST TWICE. IN PAST FEW YEARS, HOWEVER, JONATHAN HAS APPARENTLY REALIZED KING HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN KEEPING NATION TOGETHER AND HAS TAKEN STEPS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH KING WITHOUT GIVING UP ANY POWER. KING, FOR HIS PART, HAS STUDIOUSLY AVOIDED GIVING OFFENSE TO GOVERNMENT AND APPARENTLY HAS REACHED A MODUS VIVENDI WITH JONATHAN, BUT THIS IS NOT TO SAY HE HAS GIVEN UP ULTIMATE AMBITION OF BECOMING RULING AS WELL AS REIGNING MONARCH.

5. MASOPHA'S FUNERAL ORATION HAS UPSET THE UNEASY TRUCE BETWEEN KING AND PRIME MINISTER. SOME GOVERNMENT LEADERS REPORTEDLY ARE FURIOUS, BELIEVING THAT KING PUT WORDS INTO HIS BROTHER'S MOUTH, AND ARE URGING PRIME MINISTER TO TAKE PUNITIVE ACTION. KING REPORTEDLY HAS SENT AN APOLOGY TO PRIME MINISTER. COOLER HEADS REPORTEDLY ARE URGING JONATHAN TO TREAT MASOPHA'S SPEECH AS EMOTIONAL OUTPOURING OF HEARTBROKEN YOUNG MAN AND NOT LET IT INTERRUPT PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION. SO FAR, JONATHAN IS KEEPING HIS SILENCE. AN EARLY INDICATION OF HOW GOVERNMENT WILL FINALLY

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DEAL WITH INCIDENT WILL BE DECISION ON WHETHER TO PERMIT MASOPHA TO RETURN TO HIS STUDIES IN ENGLAND, WHICH HE HAD INTERRUPTED TO ATTEND HIS MOTHER'S FUNERAL.

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